

# Huntsville Atari™ Users Group

Volume 5  
Issue 9

The newsletter  
needs YOUR!!!  
inputs.

July 1987

An Independent Users Group Not Connected With Atari, Corp.

Alabama  
In The



And The  
Beautiful  
Tennessee Valley

## RAM UPGRADES DEMO by Lee Stanford

At the July meeting of the Huntsville Atari Users Group, we will be presenting a demo on the different memory expansion kits that are available for the 8-bit Atari computers. Among the different kits discussed and displayed will be the \*RAMBO\* upgrade, the \*NEWELL INDUSTRIES 256K\* upgrade and the \*AXLON 256K\* upgrade. Other upgrades will also be discussed. Plan to attend as this demo could put new life into that faithful 8-bit you've had so long.

### From Your Editor

Atari stock closed 4 June at \$32 3/8. At that point, profit taking started. I guess making almost as much in the 1st qtr of 87 as SCI (a Fortune 500 company) reported making in all of 86 would tend to help stock prices. SCI had an income of \$4,000,000 in the Jan/Mar 87 period. Atari had an income of \$15,258,000 in this same period, which is 5.5 times more than the same period last year. Sales were up 45% over last year, same period. Now if only they would lower their profit margin a bit and start providing first class service support nation wide, Atari sales and income should do even better. At this rate JT could reach his goal of making Atari a billion dollar company within five years of his purchase. On 22 June 1987, Atari made a two for one stock split. The stock closed for \$15 1/8, which is equal to \$30 1/4 at the old rate. To break the old record it will have to go to \$16 1/4.

I now have a full meg of RAM in my ST and a set of the new blitter ROMs, no blitter. They are nice. The slide bars and arrows now can scroll, which is very nice. They clear RAM faster when rebooting and seem a bit more positive and predictable in operation. They are NOT 100% compatible with the old ROMs. STARTGEM and STRTGEM2, which autorun an ST GEM program will not work. I can't create a RAM disk using SOLOR PACK and Compute!'s reset proof ram disk is no longer reset proof. There may be others that use non-standard calls that will not work. Publishing Partner and Major Motion work fine. Booting from a hard disk is MUCH faster. I have noted some increase in floppy read speed, but also noted a 23% slowdown when saving this newsletter STWRITER file to a new rom formatted disk. I have only had them for a couple of days and used them only on a few small files, so it is too early to pass judgement.

(From ST World) Atari recently completed a successful European bond issue of \$75 million at 5 1/4%. It will be used to expand business capital expenditures or acquisitions in the computer business and related areas. NSI, a chip and board maker headquartered in Marlborough, Mass. announced that Atari has purchased an equity position in the company. NSI will be supplying Atari with chips for the Atari PC's. NSI has also licensed to LSI Logic, Milpitas, CA., a Application Specific Integrated Chip (ASIC's) which were developed by NSI. NSI also manufactures five add-on boards and produces two EGA chips. NSI's goals are to provide IBM compatible makers upgrades to compete with the new IBM Personal System/2 line. No one will say what Atari's plans are.

The June 20 TV issue of Computer Cronicals (PBS -

10:30 PM) had an interesting comment in it's Random Access section at the end. Seems IBM is having a goodly number of problems with the hardware of it's new computers. They are also having trouble running MS DOS 3.3 (not 100% sure of that number as I am not into MS DOS). They have asked MicroSoft to look into the problem. So you see, Atari's past problems with the STs and XEs is no different than what any company has with new equipment, and you can expect some problems with the Megs and clones when they first come out. However, I'll bet Atari has less per unit trouble than IBM is having now and had with that load of bad hard disks a year or so ago.

(The following is the meat from an article reprinted in the June STATUS Newsletter. It is from the NORWICH USERS GROUP, NORWICH, ENGLAND.)

## TURBO-BASIC THE FIRST REPORT

By Ken Ward

.... In fact, its speed seems to be the main problem you'll have running ATARI BASIC programs in TURBO BASIC! In some programs you will have to add delay loops to slow it down!

### Problems With Bad Programming

I have come across one program that was a bit of trouble, but that was due to poor programming (which was surprising, because it was an Analog program!).

In the initializing section of the program there was the usual modifying of the display list by using:

```
DLIST=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561)
```

and then at the end of the init he had added another mod. By POKEing directly into where the display list would have been in ATARI BASIC instead of using the DLIST pointer!

The other problem was more intriguing. It centered around a loop like this...

```
10 POKE 764,255:POKE 53279,10
20 IF PEEK(764)=20 THEN 100
30 IF PEEK(764)=22 THEN 200
40 IF PEEK(53279)=5 THEN 300
50 IF PEEK(53279)=4 THEN 400
60 GOTO 10
```

It worked OK in ATARI BASIC, but in TURBO it popped straight out of the loop at line 40 even though the SELECT key had not been touched! We found that adding a short delay loop at line 15 allowed the loop to work correctly, as did POKEing 53279 with 8 in line 10, which is the correct value to clear the CONSUL keys.

### TURBO Basic Memory Map

TURBO Basic is a full 16k of code, yet it gives you another 1.5k of free memory over ATARI BASIC!

The bulk of TURBO BASIC is hidden under the operating system ROM at the top of memory. The VBLANK routine has been modified to flip between the twinned memory blocks, allowing access to both areas.

The rest of TURBO BASIC sits in the block from 8320 (\$2080) to 13864 (\$9018). This is in the area normally used by DOS (and DUP when loaded), which explains why after calling DOS you cannot go back to TURBO BASIC. Which in turn explains why DOS commands have been added to the language.

Note that because of the re-arrangement of memory, the area occupied by the screen and display list at the top, and the variable tables, etc. at the bottom, are in new positions. Providing you use the pointers to find their new locations you'll be OK.

### Formatting Disks

The only useful DOS command that is missing from TURBO BASIC is FORMAT. However, if you do get stuck and



need to format another disk - the XIO commands still work. XIO 254,#1,0,0,"D:" formats in the default drive format. If you have a 1050 and you need to format in single density use 253.

#### Changing Variable Names

The major problem I've found with my own programs is that I have been using variable names that are commands in TURBO BASIC! Names like MOVE, TEXT, DIR, MOD, DEC and HEX\$ are among my favorites! And of course it means I've had to rename them to stop TURBO BASIC erroring out.

Going through the programs modifying every occurrence of a name can be time consuming if there is a lot of them. One way out is to use a word processor in "Search and Replace" mode, but that means LISTING the program out and booting in the word processor. Again time consuming. In the end it prompted me to write my first routine in TURBO BASIC....

Type in the program and LIST it to disk. You then load the program you need to modify, ENTER the Renamer routine, and run it with G.32000

#### How It Works

In line 32070 we find the length of the variable table and dimension KEN\$ accordingly. The next two lines fill Ken\$ with the complete list of variables.

The end of a variable is marked by being an inverse character, so in the next loop, which prints all the variables on the screen, we check for an inverse character at line 32120, and convert it before printing it. If there are a lot of variables, use CONTROL-1 to freeze/unfreeze the screen.

You are then asked for the variable you want to rename. Include the '(' if it's an array, and the '\$' if it's a string.

By printing the name you've typed in and positioning the cursor before getting an input, saves you the bother of typing in the complete name. Just modify one or two letters and hit RETURN.

A check is then made to make sure the names are the same length. (This subroutine only modifies the particular name - it doesn't re-write the complete variable table).

The last character of our first input is then inversed before using the INSTR command to find it's position in the variable table. If x=0 then you've tried to modify a variable that doesn't exist!

If all is well, the last character of the new name is inversed before using the MOVE command to move the new name into the table area.

And that's all there is to it. Don't forget the programs you modify must be SAVED files. LISTed files won't put the names into the variable table in the first place - the lines will just error out.

We haven't bothered with TYPO codes on this one - the easiest way to check it is to run it by itself (after you've LISTed out a copy to disk, of course!). After you've run the program, LIST it on the screen to check the changed names.

```
32000 REM *****
32010 REM * VARIABLE RENAMER FOR *
32020 REM * USE WITH TURBO BASIC *
32030 REM * KEN WARD 8th Jan 87 *
32040 REM * NORWICH USERS GROUP *
32050 REM *****
32060 REM
32070 CLR :CLS :N=DPEEK(132)-DPEEK(130)
:DIM KEN$(N),VAR$(30),NXT$(30)
32080 KEN$="" :KENS(N)=" " :KENS(2)=KEN$
32090 MOVE DPEEK(130),ADR(KEN$),N
32100 POSITION 2,0
32110 FOR X=1 TO LEN(KEN$)
32120 Y=ASC(KEN$(X,X)):IF Y>127 THEN Y
=Y-128:CHR$(Y):GOTO 32140
32130 ?CHR$(Y);
32140 NEXT X
```

```
32150 ? "What is the name of the variable you'":? "Want to rename " :INPUT VAR$
32160 ? "Please type in new name - REMEMBER -":? "name must be same Length!":?
" " :VAR$=:POSITION 2,PEEK(84)
```

```
32170 INPUT NXT$:IF LEN (NXT$)<>LEN(VAR$) THEN ? "<-":GOTO 32160
```

```
32180 Y=ASC(VAR$(LEN(VAR$)))+128:VAR$(LEN(VAR$))=CHR$(Y)
```

```
32190 X=INSTR(KEN$,VAR$):IF X=0 THEN ? "<-":GOTO 32150
```

```
32200 Y=ASC(NXT$(LEN(NXT$)))+128:NXT$(LEN(NXT$))=CHR$(Y)
```

```
32210 MOVE ADR(NXT$),DPEEK(130)+X-1,LEN(NXT$)
```

(ED HAUG. I use the INSTR function in my ST programs and find it to be a very useful function. I find it very useful when combined with ON A GOTO xxx,xxx,xxx or ON A-Y GOTO xxx,xxx,xxx. Study its use and I think you will also like it.)

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By:NAT FRIEDLAND, ANTIC EDITOR

8-BIT UPDATE

We'll start with the good news for 8-bit users. The XF551 disk drive is the big surprise. It's a compact 5 1/4 inch drive in XE gray, about 3/4 the size of the now discontinued 1050 drive and priced in about the same \$160 range as the 1050. The XF551 is also claimed to be 2.9 times faster than a 1050 and boasts true double density -- as well as automatic compatibility with every other density format ever used for the 8-bit Atari. It seemed clear from talking to a number of Atari sources that a 3 1/2 inch disk drive for the 8-bit computers is now unlikely to be produced.

The XF551 drive will have a new ADOS operating system which is nearing completion by OSS, the creators of DOS 2 and DOS 2.5. Promised features of ADOS include a tree structure allowing directories and easy toggle between menu or command operations.

According to Atari's Jose Lopes, the key engineer/designer of the new XE products described in this dispatch, the first XF551 drives can be expected to start trickling into the stores by July. The same July arrival date now holds true for the 80-column XEP80 display box and the new 1200 baud SX212 modem. Valdes says both products have been delayed by a wait for delivery of main chips, but all other components and packaging are stockpiled in readiness for assembly at Atari's Taiwan factory.

AtariWriter Plus 80 was operating on the XEP80 in a razor-sharp 80-column display at the Atari Booth. The SX212 modem will be bundled with a new version of Keith Ledbetter's famed Express software which the author is scheduled to demonstrate later in the show.

ZMAGAZINE JUNE 22, 1987 ISSUE 58

PUBLISHERS PAGE

I received news this week about the current status of the ST Transformer. ANALOG MAGAZINE is purchasing the program and it will appear in the August or September issue. Stay tuned for details..... (From ED HAUG ... There are some copy programs out that un-copyprotect some 8-bit programs. Now that the Transformer is soon to be here, there is an honest reason to have this kind of copy program. The only way to get a copy protected 8-bit program to run on the ST will be to transfer an un-copyprotected version to your ST. The key used with PaperClip may also work on the ST. I sure hope so.)

IBM EMULATOR UPDATE

Courtesy CompuServes Atari16

PC-Ditto - David and Sandy Small



I spent awhile on the phone with Avant-Garde (like three hours) talking about PC-Ditto, so I thought I'd pass some info along, since there's a lot of curiosity about it.

Jerry called me up from Comdex and said it was amazingly good. He'd done all the things like under the table for a PC or inside for an 8088; it's a software emulator, all right. Then, he got a bunch of his own software to test it on.. and lo and behold, it worked. He ran LapLink and DesqView on it, and while he says it's slow, it does work. Apparently the emulation is at the chip level.

The guy who did it is an ex-IBM'er and sales type -- he was a pro salesman, believe me -- who's working on it with his wife. Mom and pop shop, so to speak. They've had lots of marketing offers and are very very busy. Don't expect to get through on the phone, it's always busy. My own experience with emulators is that you lose a 4X in clock speed with necessary overhead. So I'd expect about a 1-2 Mhz IBM out of this. The good thing is that I/O is done at 68000 speed, 8 Mhz, so it will only appear slow when you get computation-bound..like recalcing a spreadsheet. But just copying files, etc, it ought to scream along pretty nicely.

The big thing that they told me was they wanted everyone to know they weren't connected at all with the MS-EM people. Apparently they had received mucho negative feedback on that other product.

They've tested and certified it with lots of different IBM products; they went through a top-40 IBM product list and it ran all that stuff. The guy who's doing it sounds technically competent and is a good salesman.

Caveat: this is all based on a telephone conversation, but he does know what he's doing with emulators, and it's for real.

I'd suggest getting them online on CIS a.s.a.p. to answer questions. It sounds like it'll be a good product.

#### Discache For The ST by Levin Soule'

I recently received my copy of Discache for my ST. From the SN, I suspect I may have the very first copy on the market. When I ordered it, I did not know what a cache (pronounced cash!) program really was or did. All I saw was the ad hype for increased read and write speed. When I ordered this program I informed the company that I was the newsletter editor and was going to write a review. As a result, they included four test programs on the disk to show off what it could do. Amgem, Inc. says this is the only ST cache program that will work with the floppy disks. Contrary to what the ads for all cache programs would want you to believe, a cache program will NOT always speed-up disk reading and writing. In fact it is possible that you could suffer a slight slow-down, like maybe 1%! On the other hand, a cache program can give an APPARENT speed-up in floppy disk access of 200 times (20 times for hard disk), and drastically reduce the number of disk accesses. A cache works very much like a RAM disk, but with some very important differences. The very first time you read a group of sectors, there is NO increase in speed. But later reads of those same sectors are at RAM disk speed with no disk access as the input is from RAM. If your program later writes to those same sectors, but there is no change in the information you are writing to those sectors, the cache detects this and makes no disk write. Therefore, the apparent speed-up of up to 200 times for floppies and 20 times for hard drives. If some of the information is changed, only those changed sectors in the file being saved are written to. The speedup in saving then depends on the ratio of unchanged to changed sectors.

I was hoping the cache was a form of disk buffer that would load at max speed as much of any file you opened as the size of the buffer could hold and multi-task, so that if your program did a slow disk read,

such as in random access inputs, the data input would be at RAM disk speed, which in random access is still not as fast as the speed of input when inputting a program file. No way! In my membership program, the first read of the file was at the non cache speed. But, when the program had sorted the data and started the second 'sorted' read of the random file, the information came from the cache and not the disk. This gave a VERY nice speed increase with no disk access. The function I checked went from 100 seconds bare to 38 seconds using the cache (35 seconds with the new ROMS, old disk format). One thing that surprised me was the time it took to do a disk write when running this test. The bare program took 23 seconds to write 120 reformatted records to the disk. The cache helped program run took 12 seconds to write these same 120 records (11 seconds with the new ROMS). No-where in the documentation was there any hint that a 100% new write would be twice as fast when going through the cache. I hope this was not a fluke, but a true feature. On the other hand, if you turn off write verify, you will get writes in about half time just as in the 8-bits. Unlike a RAM disk, a cache writes to both the cache buffer and the disk at the same time if the sector (or record) to be written is different then when first read, although I noted on my membership program that this write through did not happen when it should have. It would wait until I returned to the menu and the program closed the file. I program my smaller database programs so that my records are written to both the RAM disk and the real disk, and then only when there has been a change to the record, so my saves end up being about as fast as when using a cache. On my largest database program, I do not have enough RAM to hold the data file but do have memory for a 64K cache. So, for random access use, a cache may not offer any advantage over a RAM disk, but for those times when there is no memory room for a RAM disk, the cache could result in a nice speed-up and reduction in disk access as it did for me, and also make for easier programing. I expect I will be using this cache program a good bit in the future, once I learn what it can and can't do. A cache is a first-in first-out storage mechanism which contains recently accessed data. It is like a RAM disk with auto delete when new data is loaded and the RAM disk is full, with the write through feature added.

A cache would be very helpful when compiling a program or when the same data has to be accessed several times. I used it to compile one of my 9K basic programs using LWD Basic compiler. It saved 2.25 minutes in compiling and linking a program that took 8.75 minutes without the cache. There was also a significant reduction in disk access. I allocated 100K to the drive A cache and 100K to the drive B cache. I then used a 200K RAM disk as the working disk. The same task was 3.3 minutes faster, but had a bit more disk access. If I had enough memory to copy all files to RAM and run every thing in RAM, even more time would have been saved. But, if my program had been longer, I could not have done the job at all with the RAM disk, and the cache would have been the only way. I then did the same thing with a 21K basic program. The cache was overloaded and I saved NO time. After I up-graded to 1Meg, I compiled a 21K program in RAM in 4 1/2 min instead of the 17 min for disks. The cache would have helped but not near as fast as in RAM.

From what I have read and been told by Amiga owners at work, the Amiga, unlike the ST, would really be helped by a cache, as it has to access the disk almost every time something on the workbench is used. Cache programs are big time on mainframe and multi-user systems, as they drastically reduce access time and run time of the storage device. The use of a cache on a 520ST is limited, although in wordprocessing on a 520ST, where you do a lot of saves to prevent possible data loss, it could be very helpful. A cache will not do anything for a copy protected, write protected, or game disk. It should be much more useful on a 1040ST. I could not get it to work with either STWRITER or THUNDER, but then I did not try very hard.

From what the letter included with my program said, I



suspect Discache was tested with the new blitter ROMs, although they called them 'special' ROMs. They say their special ROMs give a 25% speed increase over the ones I have in my ST. From what I have read and been told about the new ROMs, this is about what to expect from the new ROMs when used as their test programs used them. The new ROMs format using a form of the twisted format. I ran a couple of the test programs they included on the disk for me. Their times were 2/3 the time my floppy drive took. After upgrading to 1Meg and putting in the new ROMs, I timed one of their tests at 4.28 sec compared to their 3.96 sec and my old 5.94 sec with the old ROMs. Without the cache, you can double the times. The disk is not copy protected.

The test results by Amgem showed a speed increase of 10% to 40% on a hard drive when compiling, deleting and copying. Amgem says that "unlike either of our competitors, Discache works on both floppies and hard drives, .... Discache catches both individual sector reads as well as block. Neither Michtron's nor Beckemeyer's caches do this. ... it will not write a sector to the drive unless it is different from what is already on the drive."

Would I recommend the purchase of Discache? Yes and no. I believe there is a bug in the program that keeps it from working properly when writing to a single record in my random access program. I also wonder why I was not able to get it to work with Thunder. The people at Amgem, Inc. are going to get a copy of this newsletter, and I hope They will fix this bug quick and send me an upgrade. This same problem was present when running the program using slow old ST BASIC. The problem did not change with the new ROMs. They need to include on the disk a DOC file that has examples of how to setup the cache with several of the more popular ST programs, like Thunder, DBman, 1st Word, First Write, and STWRITER to name just a few. I also hope they will develop a version that will not only run as a cache, but will have a second buffer area for fast reads to help the slow sequential file and random access reads of GEM. Maybe an auto-ramdisk that could be loading while the program was reading or GEMDOS bypass of some kind could be used. I kept reading that GEM could never be AUTO started, but we now have STARTGEM and the new(?) ST (old ROMs) will now AUTORUN like the old(?) 8-bit Atari. Sooooo! This looks like it will be a very useful, worth while and fair priced program after being debugged.

Routines you can use  
by Jean Rowe & Dale Bryant  
(SBACE GAZETTE May/June 1987)

Sometimes it is desirable to be able to print to a Graphics 8 screen. As most of you know, this is not a normal text mode for the 8-bit Atari computer. The following routine uses a machine language routine to print the text contained in a string to the screen. I wish we could give credit to the author of the routine but we are sorry to say we cannot. Anyway, whoever it was, thanks. We have modified it some so that the demo program also shows a couple of other programming techniques you might find a use for.

```
0 REM L:"D:GR8TEXT"
5 DIM A(136):? CHR(125):? "Hang on!..."
10 C=0:FOR A=1 TO 136:READ B:C=C+A*B:A
(A,A)=CHR(B):NEXT A:IF C<>1024302 THEN
? "DATA ERROR":STOP
12 DIM MES(25):MESS="SBACE-Learning th
ru doing!"
18 GOTO 300
19 REM DATA FOR A$
20 DATA 216,24,165,87,105,120,168,177
22 DATA 212,133,222,104,104,133,213
24 DATA 104,133,212,104,133,215,104
26 DATA 133,214,104,104,133,216,198
28 DATA 216,169,0,133,221,164,216,177
30 DATA 214,8,41,127,201,96,176,10,201
```

```
32 DATA 32,176,4,105,64,144,2,233,32
34 DATA 10,10,38,221,10,38,221,133,220
36 DATA 165,221,109,244,2,133,221,165
38 DATA 212,24,101,216,133,218,165,213
40 DATA 105,0,133,219,160,0,177,220,40
42 DATA 8,16,2,73,255,145,218,165,218
44 DATA 24,101,222,133,218,165,219,105
46 DATA 0,133,219,200,192,8,144,228,40
48 DATA 198,216,16,167,96,39,19,19,9,9
50 DATA 19,19,39,39,39,39,39,39,19
52 DATA 39
70 REM PROG ABOVE-DEMO BELOW
75 L=LEN(MES):N=365:A=8:GRAPHICS A
80 ML=USR(ADR(A),PEEK(88)+256*PEEK(89)
+N,ADR(MES),L)
100 FOR B=1 TO 200:NEXT B:FOR A=1 TO 5
00:NEXT A:N=N+240:IF N>7410 THEN GRAPH
ICS 0:END
110 GOTO 80
300 GRAPHICS 0:POSITION 2,3
350 POKE 766,1:? "15 A(1,80)=";CHR(34)
;A(1,80);CHR(34):? "CONT"
355 POSITION 2,0:POKE 842,12:POKE 842,
13:STOP
356 POSITION 2,6
380 ? "16 A(81,136)=";CHR(34);A(81,136
);CHR(34):? "CONT"
370 POSITION 2,0:POKE 842,12:POKE 842,
13:STOP
380 POKE 842,12
390 POKE 766,0:? CHR(125)
400 POSITION 2,3
410 ? "10":? "CONT":POSITION 2,0:POKE
842,12:POKE 842,13:STOP
415 POKE 842,12
416 POSITION 2,3
420 ? "18":? "CONT":POSITION 2,0:POKE
842,12:POKE 842,13:STOP
430 POKE 842,12
450 RUN
```

When the program is RUN for the first time it will READ the data statements and create two lines of code that are not present in the original program. They will be lines 15 and 16 which will have the object code packed into a string. This makes for faster execution time as the data statements do not have to be READ each time the program is used. Also it will delete lines 10 and 18 which will no longer be needed. If you desire you can delete all the data statement line numbers and the lines from 300 on after the program is RUN the first time. This routine will work with any mode higher than 3. Just change the graphics call and try it. Have fun with your Atari, we do! (Before running this program, LIST a copy to disk under a new name so you will have it available later if you bomb the original copy. ED HAUG)

ATARI PRESS RELEASE  
June 1, 1987

In an effort to increase its piece of the US computer market, Atari Corp. is expected sometime this summer to release its first IBM PC compatible. Computer analysts think it will be among the lowest-priced clones available.

Jerry Brown, recently hired Atari vice president for US operation, has told Paul Freiburger of The San Francisco Examiner, "We operate in the same style as the Japanese. Most companies in corporate America are bloated. Atari operates like a startup."

Brown says he'll score in the PC-compatible market as Atari gradually builds momentum for its ST line of products in the United States, but acknowledges he will need more retailers.

Colleagues agree. Says President Bruce Davis of Activision, "Their distribution has been a bit fragmented and constrained here in the US. (Atari needs) more places for consumers to buy their computers, whether it's dealers, discount stores or mail order."



Freiberger says Atari is expected to spend \$10 million on TV ads this year, compared with about \$2 million last year.

And, while the IBM clone probably will grab the media attention, Brown also told the paper the company will release this summer a low-cost laser printer and a more powerful version of its ST called the Mega ST. The products, packaged together for about \$3,000, are expected to court the desktop publishing market.

Freiberger comments, "The question is whether these moves will be sufficient to persuade a major retail chain such as ComputerLand or Businessland to carry the Atari line. ... Brown also said Atari could opt to sell the inexpensive ST nationwide in mass-market retail stores."

This article ctsy of CompuServes'  
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From the Atari Booth, topped with a real Cessna Airplane, the word was "flying high with Atari". The theme followed through into the exhibit space where Flight Simulator II played from a cartridge on a large screen monitor inside the cockpit of a Cessna. Atari chose to push its game side, and the new computer lines were not being shown. There was a PC Clone getting minimal attention but the absence of MEGA ST's, Laser printers, 1200 baud modems, Blitter enhanced ST's, IBM emulator, and 80 Column Cards, left little doubt that this was to be a game show. Recently appointed Vice President and General Manager of US operations, J. J. (Jerry) Brown confirmed this in his press release stating "Atari intends to remain the leader in video game systems and to increase its share of the US personal computer market."

While this author's first impressions (as an Atari BUSINESS computer user) were quite negative, given that the preceding release, titled "ATARI ANNOUNCES AGGRESSIVE NEW MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT VIDEO GAMES AND PERSONAL COMPUTERS" was simultaneously issued with releases titled "ATARI ANNOUNCES 40 NEW GAMES AND LICENSING AGREEMENTS WITH COMPUTER GAME AND ARCADE COMPANIES" and "ATARI TO BEGIN SHIPMENT OF NEW XE GAME SYSTEM BUNDLED WITH THREE POPULAR GAMES" and given that no "business" computer releases were made, a closer reading of the releases lead to some rather surprising hypotheses of the situation. (See Following Article). The first page and 3/4's of the 3 page advertising campaign announcement is devoted to game machine promotions planned for the balance of this year, including national TV spots starting in September, comic book ads, in store hardware and software demos, and full repackaging of the game machines and XE's.

Not until the back pages did we note that 4 TV ads (starting late 3rd quarter and running through New Years) and a substantial portion of the new advertising budget (quadrupled from previous levels) would be devoted to the ST's! (This as opposed to 3 new ads starting in September for the games). The budget also calls for some major print ads to follow and support the TV effort.

Now the pessimist will assume that Atari is bent on forgetting the computers in favor of games. The more business oriented will notice that Atari Stock and Sales of ST's have been doing rather well, and that in the introduction of the ST's and MEGA the games assets of the company were nearly step-children. Further, the XE is almost in direct competition with the ST's and likely in an overstocked condition at Atari.

The optimist will, therefore, assume that Atari is on a campaign to liquidate the old stock in new boxes, maintain its game market share, and produce the liquidity and corporate energies to actively continue its ST advantage. In assessing Atari's strategies, one must remember that the manpower of this company has sorely lagged it's growth in home computer market share, and that Atari had nothing to do with the conflicting schedules of CES and Comdex this year. With limited manpower and time to produce and to sell product, I am

optimistic and feel that Atari made the right decisions in the face of the tough decision forced by The Interface Group's show timing. The balance of this quarter should tell! -- Dave Groves (c) 1987

[CES Gang] DARLAH> There were a number of 3rd party vendors in the Atari booth with some new products. Gordon can tell you about Michtron/Microdeal offerings (Airball looked pretty slick!). EA was showing Music Construction Set for the ST, written by Intersect. Looked pretty nice.

Mindscape had some games like Plutos (much...expanded beyond the bootleg version showing up on BBSs) and a 3-D pool game. MidiMaze from Hybrid Arts is finally done... and is being copy protected -- should ship in 2 weeks. They added lots of new features like observer modes, smart and done drones, teams, and more -- great game!

One small company had a strange package called Easel that lets you put any DEGAS picture in place of the desktop background, tends to slow down the system overall, though.

Timeworks had a collection of utilities in the form of a desk accessory called Partner ST -- a Thesaurus is included. Broderbund announced Printshop, Karateka, and a combined version of Art Director with Film Director (yay!) -- they have committed to attending the Santa Clara Atari show. Looks like they're backing us in a big way.

Microprose is finishing up Gunship and one of their other games (maybe F-15??) Atari has shipped a few of the Arrakis educational programs like Biology, Algebra, and some others, aimed at middle school students.

Psygnosis has a hot new game called Barbarian -- a fully graphic fantasy role-playing game -- point at an object and get a window with a list of things to do or describe.

Eidsoft had a sound digitizer called Pro Sound Designer.

A company called the Robot Factory had a really neat gimmick -- a fuzzy doll robot that was hooked up to the ST through MIDI and was playing the keyboard in time with a piano roll program from QRS. Its mouth moved in time with the voice of the announcer through a microphone -- this one got filmed by MTV News.

There were some other ST things too that were talked about, we'll have to post these to the ST RT as we dig through our notes. On the game side, We had the new XE Game System on display along with a finished version of Flight Simulator II on a 256K ROM cart (includes the program and the scenery disk). There were 8 or 10 new titles for both the 7800 and the 2600. One-on-One for the 7800 is done and is \*great\* (I am undefeated in the last year, it must be great!) and Desert Falcon is also done and in production.

Even the new 2600 games were pretty impressive. And Activision and Epyx announced that they're doing their own titles for the 2600, and Atari Explorer and ANALOG will begin video game coverage on a limited basis.

Atari will have their own booth at NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) late in June, making us the first computer manufacturer to ever exhibit there. We want to OWN the MIDI market.

That's about it for now, lets open the floor to chaos now.

<[MichTron] GORDON> before we do that we will let John Symes from Microdeal tell you about all the new stuff Microdeal showed at CES.

<MICROD> I saw a 3d game player from sega today....pretty good. We were demoing Airball, a marble madness type game but with rooms, nearly 300 rooms and after 4 days of the show we are all still playing. You cannot put this down....shipping June 8th. We also had REPLAY, our sound digitizer. This really does digitize great and has code for GFA as well. We also showed DIGI DRUM the drum kit sequencer.

MichTron was showing a demo version of a new GFA Product called GFA Object. Its similar to Antic's Cad 3D but much easier to use and you can take the pictures and use them in BASIC, Vector and GFA DRAFT PLUS.



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